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The role of religiosity in ethical decision-making:

A study on Islam and the Malaysian workplace

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Abstract

In light of the ongoing debate on the relationship between religiosity and ethical decision-making, this thesis seeks to investigate this relationship in the Malaysian workforce environment. This investigation focuses on the Islamic religion, and considers how religiosity affects the articulation and feelings of frontline employees in ways that lead to ethical decisions. To this end, five factors were tested empirically to determine their mediation of the relationship between religiosity and ethical decision-making. These factors were: perceived importance of the ethical issue, moral judgment, ego strength, intention, and conscience.

A quantitative research study was undertaken to test eleven hypotheses developed in the thesis. With 160 responses, the initial analysis was an exploratory factor analysis, which was conducted to see how the measures might group into constructs. This analysis was followed by a confirmatory factor analysis to confirm the previous analysis, and to reduce items in the scale, as well as to test validity and reliability of the scales. The final scales were subsequently used for hypotheses-testing using hierarchical regression analysis. The control variables in this study were perceived ethical environment and social desirability responding bias.

The findings of this thesis indicated positive relationships between religiosity and perceived importance of ethical issues, moral judgment, intention, and conscience. However, among these, only conscience mediates the relationship between religiosity and ethical decision-making. The thesis gives insights to the perspective of the Islamic religion, especially for Muslims in Malaysia, while contributing to the ongoing discussion in the literature on the relationship between religiosity and ethical decision-making. The

highlight in the conscience results inspires employers to hold educational talks to empower employees in terms of Islamic knowledge, on how to navigate the challenging working place. Additionally, there are benefits in using elements such as posters and calls to prayer to remind employees of religious values.

The research serves as a good basis for new investigations to explore other personal attributes that mediate the relationship between religiosity and ethical decision-making. Analysing this relationship can assist employers in developing ethical human resources in the organisation. These efforts will not only benefit the organisations, but will contribute to the betterment of society as a whole.

List of publications

1. Sulaiman, R., Toulson, P., Brougham, D., & Lempp, F. (2016). *The role of religiosity in ethical decision-making at the workplace: Focus on Islam*. Paper presented at the Asia International Conference (AIC), Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.
2. Sulaiman, R., Toulson, P., Brougham, D., & Lempp, F. (2017). The role of religiosity in ethical decision-making at the workplace: Focus on Islam. *Advanced Science Letters*, 23(9), 8335-8340. <https://doi.org/10.31166/asl.2017.9888>
3. Sulaiman, R., Toulson, P., Brougham, D., & Lempp, F. (2017). *Ethical decision-making at the workplace: The study of intrapersonal conflict and religiosity*. Paper presented at the 7th Annual Australasian Business Ethics Network (ABEN) Conference, Melbourne, Australia.
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List of abbreviations

HR - Hoge's religiosity

HRM - Human resource management

IR - Islamic religiosity

MI - Modification indices

PIE - Perceived importance of ethical issue

SDB - Social desirability bias